

Message Text

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SUBJECT: DISCUSSION OF STRUGGLE BETWEEN TWO LINES IN MILITARY
AFFAIRS APPEARS TO MARK NEW STAGE IN CAMPAIGN

1. THE APPEARANCE ON FRONT PAGE OF SEPTEMBER 4 "PEOPLE'S DAILY"
OF A NEW SHORT COMMENTARY FROM "RED FLAG" APPEARS TO US TO MAKE A
NEW STAGE IN THE CURRENT POLITICAL CAMPAIGN AIMED MORE DIRECTLY
AT FIGURES IN THE MILITARY. THE COMMENTARY CAPS OVER A MONTH
OF ARTICLES WHICH DISCUSSED THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN MAO'S TEN
MILITARY PRINCIPLES AND LIN PIAO'S SIX PRINCIPLES LARGELY IN
TERMS OF CORRECT MILITARY STRATEGY. RECENT ARTICLES HAVE
MADE IT CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT A CORRECT MILITARY LINE GROWS OUT OF
A CORRECT POLITICAL LINE, AND THE "RED FLAG" SHORT COMMENTARY
NOW MAKES IT EXPLICIT THAT THE MILITARY DEBATE MUST ALSO BE
CLOSELY INTEGRATED WITH THE CAMPAIGN TO CRITICIZE LIN PIAO
AND CONFUCIUS.

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2. YUGOSLAV EMBASSY COUNSELLOR VINKO TRCEK TOLD USLO OFFICER SEPTEMBER 3 THAT HE HAS EVIDENCE INDEPENDENT OF PUBLISHED MATERIALS THAT A NEW ROUND OF CRITICISM OF CERTAIN MILITARY ELEMENTS IS UNDERWAY, AND HE ARGUES THAT POLITBURO MEMBER LI TEH-SHENG HAS NOW FALLEN, LARGELY DUE TO HIS ROLE AS PLA POLITICAL COMMISSAR. HE ALSO FEELS, AND WE AGREE, THAT THE REHABILITATION OF YANG CHENG-WU AND THE OTHERS WHO APPEARED AT ARMY DAY IS CONNECTED WITH THE PRESENT DEBATE ON MILITARY AFFAIRS.

3. TWO KEY ISSUES SEEM TO US TO BE IN QUESTION. FIRST, THERE IS THE QUESTION OF THE DEGREE OF CIVILIAN PARTY CONTROL OVER THE MILITARY. THIS, OF COURSE, IS NOT NEW, BUT THE PRESENT DEBATE APPEARS TO INVOLVE A NEW ATTEMPT AT FURTHER STRENGTHENING PARTY DOMINANCE. SECOND, THERE IS THE LONG STANDING DEBATE BETWEEN MILITARY CAREERISTS SEEKING A MODERNIZED PLA AND ADVOCATES OF THE TRADITIONAL MAOIST MILITARY LINE WHICH HARKS BACK TO THE CIVIL WAR AND ANTI-JAPANESE STRUGGLE, IN WHICH GUERRILLA TACTICS WERE EMPHASIZED. IN THIS CONTEXT, WE THINK THERE IS A SLIGHTLY DEFENSIVE NOTE IN THE "RED FLAG" COMMENTARY'S ATTACK ON LIN PIAO'S ADVOCACY OF CONVENTIONAL WARFARE DURING THE ANTI-JAPANESE STRUGGLE AND THE REFERENCE TO CHAIRMAN MAO'S HAVING DRAWN ON LESSONS OF CHINESE HISTORICAL FIGURES (LEGALISTS OF COURSE) IN DEVELOPING HIS OWN MILITARY THEORIES. SOME PEOPLE MAY BE ASKING WHY IT WAS, IF LIN PIAO'S MILITARY LINE WAS SO BAD, HE LASTED AS LONG AS HE DID AND ATTAINED SUCH HIGH RANK.

4. AT THIS STAGE IT IS DIFFICULT TO SPECULATE FURTHER ON THE PROBABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS CAMPAIGN. IT DOES APPEAR, HOWEVER, TO MAKE YET ANOTHER TURN IN THE BROADER POLITICAL STRUGGLE WHICH HAS BEEN UNDERWAY OVER THE PAST YEAR. USLO WOULD WELCOME ANY COMMENTS OR OBSERVATIONS HONG KONG MAY HAVE ON THIS SUBJECT. BRUCE

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